

very extraordinary. He said he would not withdraw his memo in which he instructed the FBI to get involved with local school boards.

Why would the FBI be interested in parents' meetings with their school board? If there is a reason for law enforcement to be involved, it is probably something local law enforcement can handle.

So the direction will have the effect of intimidating parents who speak out about their children's education. And make no mistake about it, we have heard those reports from the parents themselves. The Attorney General should then withdraw the memo.

Here are the facts:

No. 1, on September 29, the National School Boards Association sent a letter to President Biden asking for help from Federal law enforcement against concerned parents who are getting involved at local school board meetings. That letter compared parents to domestic terrorists. It even suggested the PATRIOT Act should be used against them. Now, remember, the PATRIOT Act was passed 20 years ago, written to protect Americans against terrorists.

Point No. 2: On October 4, Attorney General Garland put out a memo telling the FBI and other parts of the Department of Justice to work with local governments on the supposed spike in harassment, intimidation, and threat of violence against local school boards. The National Security Division is included as well, apparently because they deal with domestic terrorists and the PATRIOT Act.

Attorney General Garland has since testified that he gave the Department of Justice this instruction because of what he read in the National School Boards Association letter to President Biden just 5 days earlier of when the memo was issued. This is an extraordinary deployment of Federal law enforcement in local issues when we have problems—very big problems—like a historic murder surge and especially an open southern border. That latter, the southern border, you see the chaos and the crisis every day on television.

From these two points, what have we learned since the memo was put out? First, we learned the White House helped write the original letter from the National School Boards Association sent to the White House, not to the Department of Justice. Next, we learned that the State school board associations, affiliated with the national association, had nothing to do with putting together the letter. Over 20 of these State organizations have publicly disavowed the National School Boards Association's letter that brought about this directive.

Now, think about that. The White House helped write a letter to itself comparing parents who love their kids to domestic terrorists, but the actual members of the National School Boards Association had nothing to do with it.

On October 22, the National School Boards Association actually apologized

for its original letter that started this whole mess in the first place and was never even authorized by its own board.

Meanwhile, 17 State attorneys general have written to Attorney General Garland saying there has been no spike in violence against local school boards. So the idea that parents pose any sort of Federal threat to local school boards is all just simply made up by what looks to be the White House for political purposes.

Despite all that, the Attorney General says he will not change one thing about his memo telling the Department of Justice to continue focusing on local school boards. That memo stands, as far as the Attorney General is concerned.

Attorney General Garland says that he doesn't see how it could be interpreted to mean the FBI will go after impassioned parents. He says there are lines in constitutional law that law enforcement can't cross. Well, that is true, but he has been working with the Constitution his entire life. However, most parents and most school board members aren't experts on the First Amendment.

These parents are reading the Attorney General's own words to mean that when they speak passionately at local school board meetings, they could get in trouble with Federal officials. So parents are going to stop speaking up at local school board meetings, and that is what is known as a chilling effect.

That might be what some at the White House or the National School Boards Association wanted all along, but it is a horrible thing for our democracy, and it should never happen in the United States of America.

Attorney General Garland has said he wants to depoliticize the Department of Justice. Now, he wants Federal prosecutors parsing what parents say to their local school board members. This is because he thinks there is a disturbing spike in violence by parents, but he is not actually sure if that is right. And this instruction is going to scare parents out of speaking their minds at local school board meetings. But the Attorney General won't change his instructions to the FBI.

Mr. Attorney General, parents are not domestic terrorists, and you have only one reasonable choice: Withdraw this memo and focus on the real threats and dangers that American citizens face. Stop being a pawn for the White House by politicizing the Department of Justice.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

NOMINATION OF BETH ROBINSON

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, the Senate today is going to vote on the confirmation of Vermont's own Justice Beth Robinson, a vote to confirm her to serve as a judge on the Second Circuit Court of Appeals.

As an advocate, Beth Robinson has been rightfully hailed as a tireless

champion for equal rights and equal justice, but more importantly, her record as a Vermont Supreme Court justice clearly demonstrates her fairness, her impartiality, and loyalty to the rule of law above all else.

We Vermonters overwhelmingly support her nomination, including elected officials—both Republicans and Democrats—the entire Vermont Supreme Court, and the Vermont Bar Association; they overwhelmingly support her.

Justice Robinson will fill Vermont's seat on the Second Circuit, and I believe she is the best, strongest candidate for this position. She deserves bipartisan support in this Senate, as she got last week on a vote.

Beth Robinson was appointed to the Vermont Supreme Court by Governor Peter Shumlin in November 2011. To give you some idea of the bipartisan support she has had over the years, the Vermont Senate, Republicans and Democrats, have to vote on her nomination, and they voted unanimously to have her on the Vermont Supreme Court.

All current Vermont Supreme Court justices, appointed by both Democratic and Republican Governors, have signed a letter supporting her nomination to the Second Circuit. For the past decade, she has served on the court honorably. She has also participated in nearly 1,800 decisions.

Now, I am a member of the Vermont bar, and I pay attention to what happens, and I see her tenure as being a display of a commitment to the rule of law. Her unwavering, decade-long dedication as a jurist and her loyalty to the law above all else has made Beth Robinson an outstanding Vermont Supreme Court justice. No Vermonter doubts she will carry that approach to justice with her in the Second Circuit.

Let me talk a little bit about before she was on the bench. Prior to the time on the bench, Justice Robinson dedicated her legal career to pursuing liberty and justice for all. She spent the beginning of her legal career defending workers' rights and advancing discrimination cases. It was during this time that she worked pro bono as co-counsel to the plaintiffs in the case *Baker v. State* that challenged Vermont's then-protection on same-sex marriage.

She successfully litigated this landmark decision in which the Vermont Supreme Court upheld equal protections for same-sex couples and actually led Vermont to become the first State in the Union to enact civil unions in the country.

As a litigator, her work served as a blueprint for LGBTQ advocacy across the country. She successfully represented an employee at the University of Vermont, who sought recognition of his Canadian marriage to a same-sex partner for health insurance purposes; another, a couple seeking recognition of their out-of-State marriage in the context of second-parent adoption; and

a same-sex partner seeking Social Security survivor benefits for her child after her civil union partner died.

In every case, she fought to secure legal protections and equality under the law. In fact, Beth changed the trajectory of LGBTQ rights in this country. Her tireless work has led our Nation toward justice.

Unfortunately, in what is becoming more and more of a toxic atmosphere, Justice Robinson's path to confirmation has faced baseless attacks. At her confirmation hearing, Justice Robinson's commitment to religious liberty was called into question. Now, these attacks are simply not grounded in reality. Any honest reading of her record proves that Justice Robinson is committed to protecting religious liberty. Some members argued that Robinson's work representing a Catholic woman who believed she had been discriminated against due to her own religious beliefs was, astonishingly, evidence of Robinson's hostility toward religious liberty.

At Justice Robinson's hearing, other members of the Judiciary Committee quoted her out of context in what I saw as an attempt to support a false narrative. One member of the committee read part of a sentence from a marriage law symposium that Justice Robinson participated in and suggested that it was proof of her hostility toward religious liberty.

I said "read part of" it, but the attack line falls apart the moment you bother to read the full sentence. In the full quote, Justice Robinson states:

I've always said that if somebody tried to force the Catholic Church to do a gay wedding, I would represent the Church pro bono.

You can't construe that as hostility to religious freedom.

Justice Robinson has a long record of supporting the fundamental right to religious liberty, both as a judge and as an advocate.

The Vermonters I have heard from—regardless of party or ideology, regardless of their religion—are delighted that President Biden nominated Beth Robinson to fill the Vermont seat on the Second Circuit. Our leading Republicans, our leading Democrats agree with that.

If confirmed, she knows she will become the first openly gay woman to serve on a Federal circuit court of appeals.

I would urge all Senators to evaluate Justice Robinson's record. And I hope that Senators of both parties will see, as I have, that she possesses exactly the right qualities, skills, and experience to excel as a judge on the Second Circuit.

Before I was in the Senate, I had the privilege to argue cases before the Second Circuit. I saw it as a court where you never thought of whether they were Republicans or Democrats; you thought about their abilities, and I always felt comfortable arguing there. Justice Robinson, when she becomes Judge Robinson, will give that same

view to anybody who is a litigant before that court.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alabama.

VETERANS DAY

Mr. TUBERVILLE. Mr. President, in 1919, President Woodrow Wilson declared November 11 as Armistice Day, marking an agreement the year prior between the Allied Nations and Germany to temporarily cease fighting during World War I.

President Wilson said:

The reflections of Armistice Day will be filled with solemn pride in the heroism of those who died in the country's service and with gratitude for the victory, both because of the thing from which it has freed us and because of the opportunity it has given America to show her sympathy with peace and justice in the councils of the nations.

In battles before World War I and in battles since, our servicemembers and veterans have served to protect the American way of life. Every year, our country pauses on November 11 to recognize our veterans with the solemn pride and gratitude that President Wilson referenced.

We all wake up each morning and enjoy the freedoms this great country affords us because of our veterans—because it was our veterans, our men and women in uniform, who were there when their country needed them most. While their roles span multiple theaters and decades, our veterans were and continue to be united by a common mission: to protect and to defend the United States of America. This is a great responsibility they shouldered, and they deserve gratitude equal to their great sacrifice. Our veterans may say that they are just ordinary Americans doing their job. They may be ordinary, but they performed an extraordinary service to our country.

Alabama is home to nearly 400,000 veterans, and today it is my honor to recognize a few of them for their service. I have had the pleasure of meeting many veterans from my great State, and I am always inspired by their service and their sacrifice.

Their patriotism is unmatched, and their courage is unwavering, like that of CPL Edsel Bonds of Samson, AL, who experienced a shell blast to his right femur on January 28, 1966, while on a mission to intercept guerillas during the Vietnam war. The blast blew out 4 inches of his femur bone and several muscle groups. He spent most of a year recovering in the hospital from this horrific injury and never lost the love for his country.

Now, nearly 56 years later from the time of his injury, he is just as patriotic as ever. He views his service as something that was necessary for our country to remain the greatest country in the world. Corporal Bonds risked life and limb because he believed that America is worth sacrificing for.

We enjoy the blessings of living in a free nation but often discount the fact that our liberties come with a tremen-

dous cost. Many brave men and women have paid a price that even our deepest gratitude could never, ever repay.

I think Elmer Davis, the Director of the U.S. Office of War Information during World War II, said it best:

This nation will remain the land of the free only so long as it is home of the brave.

One-hundred-year-old SGT George Mills of Decatur, AL, showed great bravery during his time serving in World War II. The Germans surrounded his company 500 yards from the German border and launched attacks into the building where they were staying, setting it on fire. With no ammunition left to defend the enemy, Sergeant Mills and his fellow comrades were forced to surrender.

For the next 5 months, George Mills and his company were marched across Europe toward the former Czechoslovakia without food. They were starved and no doubt weary. Yet Sergeant Mills and his company persevered. They survived by eating scraps of sugar beets and rutabagas found in barns where they were held captive before they were finally liberated on April 13, 1945.

During this initial attack, Sergeant Mills, despite being injured, sprang to action to help save the lives of those in his company. He was awarded a Purple Heart for his bravery.

Another American hero is Fred Lacy of Auburn, AL. A lieutenant colonel in the U.S. Army, Mr. Lacy provided valuable leadership and negotiation skills during his time in Europe, Korea, and Vietnam. He and his brigade helped defend the western half of the Korean demilitarized zone at the end of the Korean war, ensuring that there were no weaknesses in our defense for North Korea to attack. During the Vietnam war, he coordinated all U.S. activity in the Mekong Delta and assisted the Vietnamese in combating the Vietcong.

He volunteered in a leprosy orphanage in his free time while staying there. He was a natural at building relationships and resolving conflicts during his time. During a dispute between a Vietnamese and an American officer, Fred stepped in front of a gun to prevent the American officer from being shot.

He received two Bronze Stars and the Combat Infantryman Badge for his leadership and courageous efforts. When reflecting on his service, he says that it was "a privilege to serve." That spirit of service is something he carries with him even after his time in the military.

Lieutenant Colonel Lacy has taught Bible classes for more than 60 years and still teaches today at Auburn United Methodist Church.

We, as citizens of this country, are privileged to have veterans like Lieutenant Colonel Lacy who have not only honorably fought for our freedom but have also proudly carried the torch of liberty across the world. They love their country, and you don't have to talk with them very long before you